

Construction-Based Research in China

Xu Yang, Wuhan University and Randy J. Lapolla, Beijing Normal University - Zhuhai Campus

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Summary

Research on construction-based grammar in China began in the late 1990's. Since its initial stages of introduction and preliminary exploration, it has entered a stage of productive and innovative development. In the past two decades, Chinese construction grammarians have achieved a number of valuable research results. In terms of theoretical applications, they have described and explained various types of constructions, such as schematic, partly variable, and fully substantive constructions. They have also applied the constructionist approach to the teaching of Chinese as a second language, proposing some new grammar systems or teaching modes such as the construction-chunk approach (构式-语块教学法), the lexicon-construction interaction model (词汇-构式互动体系), and trinitarian grammar (三一语法). In terms of theoretical innovation, Chinese construction grammarians have put forward theories or hypotheses such as the unification of grammar and rhetoric through constructions, the concept of lexical coercion, and interactive construction grammar (互动构式语法).

However, some problems have also emerged in the field of construction grammar approaches. These include a narrow understanding of the concept of construction, a limited range of research topics, and a narrow range of disciplinary perspectives and methods. To ensure the long-term development of construction-based research in China, scholars should be encouraged to make the following changes: First, they should adopt a usage-based approach using natural data, and they should keep up with advances in the study of construction networks. Second, they should broaden the scope of construction-based research and integrate it with language typology and historical linguistics. Finally, they should integrate cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary research findings and methods. In this way, construction-based research in China can continue to flourish and make significant contributions to the study of grammar and language.

Keywords: constructionist approach, construction, construction grammar, construction grammarians, usage-based approaches, Chinese

Subjects: Applied Linguistics, History of Linguistics, Linguistic Theories, Morphology, Syntax

1. Introduction

Construction-based research has flourished in China in recent years, with numerous scholars joining the field and substantial research results being produced. As B. J. Zhang (2018, pp. 2–3) asserts, “The rapid spread and wide application of constructionist approaches in Chinese studies has surpassed the influence of any previous foreign methods.” Two attitudes have emerged in this regard, one arguing that “the constructionist approaches can be used to generalize and explain all linguistic phenomena” (Y. Wang, 2011, Vol. 1, p. 194); one arguing that “we cannot infinitely exaggerate the status and role of constructionist approaches, leading to the cult of constructions (构式崇拜).” (C. H. Shi, 2013, p. 36. Although there have been some reviews of

construction-based research in China (e.g., Chang, 2021; Hou, 2014; C. H. Shi, 2017; Wen & Si, 2021; J. Zhang, 2013), they have certain shortcomings, such as ignoring literature that uses Chinese translations of “construction” other than *goushi* (构式), the current standard term, and the fact that these reviews were written in Chinese, making them inaccessible to non-Chinese-speaking scholars. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to provide an overview of construction-based research in China that is accessible to non-Chinese-speaking scholars. The structure of the article is as follows: First, an overview of the development of construction-based research in China is provided. Next, the three main issues that exist are discussed. Finally, an outlook is offered regarding the future development of construction-based research in China. It should be noted that this paper primarily focuses on the situation in Mainland China, and the studies presented are mainly about the language phenomena in Mandarin Chinese.

2. Overview of Construction-Based Research in China

The core idea of the constructionist approach has a long history in China. L. Wang (1943/1984, p. 117) argued that the meaning of the *ba* (把) construction as a whole is “performance” (处置). Li and Fan (1960) proposed that the meaning of a special quantitative construction such as *Yi ge ren na yi ge* (一个人拿一个) ‘one person takes one’, is distributive and asserted that the meaning does not lie in *yi* ‘one’, but is determined by the construction. Aside from this, in a paper on the ditransitive construction Ma (1983, p. 194) pointed out that “the meaning of the verb sometimes depends on the construction.” And the teaching of Mandarin Chinese has always been done in terms of constructions, for example the *ba* (把) construction, the *bei* (被) construction, the *shi* (是) . . . *de* (的) constructions, and so on. However, the current constructionist approach originated in and was imported from the United States. Construction-based research in China began when B. J. Zhang (1999) discussed the ditransitive construction in Mandarin Chinese on the basis of Goldberg (1995), proposing that “the construction as a whole has an independent grammatical meaning” (B. J. Zhang, 1999, p. 176). After that, many articles were published that introduced constructionist approaches (e.g., Dong & Liang, 2002;¹ Ji & Lin, 2002) and analyzed Chinese-language phenomena based on constructionist approaches (e.g., J. M. Lu, 2004; Shen, 2000). According to Wen and Si (2021), the development of construction-based research in China has gone through different stages, from the initial stage of introduction and preliminary exploration (1990s–2006), through a stage of rapid development and maturity (2007–2015), and then moving into the current stage of reflection and innovation (2016–present). During this 20+ year period, many active construction grammarians have emerged, such as Chen Manhua (陈满华), Gao Hang (高航), Hou Guojin (侯国金), Lin Zhengjun (林正军), Liu Zhengguang (刘正光), Lu Jianming (陆俭明), Shi Chunhong (施春宏), Wang Yin (王寅), Wei Zaijiang (魏在江), Wen Xu (文旭), Xiong Xueliang (熊学亮), Yan Minfen (严敏芬), Yuan Ye (袁野), Zhang Jianli (张建理), and Zhong Shuneng (钟书能). In addition, a large number of works on constructionist approaches have been published, including Chinese versions of classics or textbooks such as Niu et al. (2013, 2017), H. B. Wu (2007, 2013), G. H. Zhang (2016); theoretical monographs such as Y. Wang (2011), Niu (2011), Niu et al. (2020), Yuan (2017), Yan and Li (2018); empirical monographs such as Zhu (2010), Gu (2013), W. S. Wu (2016), C. H. Shi (2018), Y. S. Zhang (2020), Luo and Zheng (2021); and some much-cited papers can be found in Z. G. Liu (2011). In addition, some journals have organized sections on constructionist approaches (e.g., the “Theory and Application of Construction Grammar” section

in *Language Teaching and Linguistic Studies* [语言教学与研究], No. 4, 2018), and some universities or institutions have organized forums or conferences on constructionist approaches (e.g., the influential Forum on Construction Grammar Research [构式语法研究论坛] has been held four times). The following sections introduce the various Chinese translations of the word *construction*, the theoretical applications, and the innovations in constructionist approaches in China.

2.1 Chinese Translations of the Word Construction

The earliest reference to the terms *construction* and *construction grammar* in the Chinese literature can be traced back to a conference review by Y. W. Liu (1988) entitled “The 1987 Spring Conference of the Japanese National Language Society Held at Kobe University.” Liu mentioned that Professor Fillmore’s presentation was titled “On Grammatical Constructions: Toward the Theory of Construction Grammar.” Unfortunately, no Chinese translation was provided at that time. Since the early 1990s, *construction* has been translated using various Chinese terms, including *jiegou* (结构; Liao, 1991; Rong, 1990), *jiegoushi* (结构式; Shen, 1994; B. J. Zhang, 1999), *geshi* (格式; M. Zhang, 1998), *jushi* (句式; J. M. Lu, 2004; B. J. Zhang, 1999), *goushi* (构式; Shen & Wang, 2000), *jiangou* (建构; W. H. Tao, 2000), *goukuai* (构块; Xu, 2000), *goujia* (构架; Cheng, 2003), *gouzao* (构造; Y. Z. Shi, 2007; Y. Wang, 2006), *zugou* (组构; W. H. Tao, 2007), and others.² Before 2004, *jushi* (句式) was popular for a while, as a result of the influence of two important papers by Shen (1999) and B. J. Zhang (1999). For instance, J. M. Lu (2004, p. 412) said “*construction grammar* is mostly translated as *jushi yufa* (句式语法).” From 2004 to 2007, the term *goushi* (构式) gained popularity (Shen & Wang, 2000 used *goushi* [构式] for the first time). During that period, a lot of the literature consciously discussed the advantages and disadvantages of different translations (e.g., Dong & Liang, 2002; Ji & Lin, 2002; G. H. Liu, 2007; J. M. Lu, 2004; Y. Wang, 2006), and many scholars chose to use *goushi* (构式) from then on. After 2007, *goushi* (构式) became the most widely used translation, while other translations declined in usage. Lu (2008, p. 143) noted “the *goushi* (构式) translation is now more commonly used in China,” in contrast to the situation in 2004. Since 2023, the third edition of the *Great Encyclopedia of China* online has adopted *goushi* (构式) as the Chinese equivalent of *construction*, and it can be said that a standard translation of *construction* has been established in China.³

2.2 Theoretical Applications

Theoretical applications of constructionist approaches include describing and explaining Chinese grammatical phenomena, teaching Chinese as a first or second language, Chinese-language acquisition, natural-language processing and artificial intelligence, lexicography, and translation studies, among others. This article mainly focuses on the first two applications.

Chinese scholars have discussed various constructions. There are schematic constructions, such as the ditransitive construction, and fully substantive constructions such as the four-character fixed phrases common in Chinese, and also constructions between these two poles that are partly variable. Schematic constructions include the ditransitive construction (Xu, 2007; B. J. Zhang,

1999, 2008), the causative construction (Guo, 2004; Zhang & Xu, 2011), the existential construction (Ren, 2009; Y. Wang & Xu, 2010), the verb-complement construction (C. H. Shi, 2008; Yang, 2021; Y. Zhang, 2009), and the supply-and-use construction (J. M. Lu, 2004, 2008). The basic research procedure for discussing constructions is to describe the form and meaning of the prototype of a specific construction, and then explain the polysemy of the construction based on derivational mechanisms such as metaphor. Partly variable constructions include the *ba* (把) construction (Niu, 2008; Shen, 2002; B. J. Zhang, 2000, 2008), the *bei* (被) construction (B. J. Zhang, 2001, 2008), the *lian* (连) construction (D. Q. Liu, 2005), “*hai* (还) NP” (Zheng, 2009), “*bu dao nali qu* (不到哪里去)” (W. S. Wu & Xia, 2011), and “*yao* (要) *duo* (多) A *you* (有) *duo* (多) A” (G. S. Wang et al., 2015), as well as various popular-idiom constructions such as “*Bushi suoyou de X dou jiao/shi Y* (不是所有的X都叫/是Y, Not all X are called/are Y)” (Y. S. Zhang, 2020). The basic research procedure of these studies is to demonstrate that these constructions meet the criteria of a construction (because most Chinese scholars do not accept the broad definition of construction, as discussed in Section 3.1); to discuss the construction’s meaning (as a construction) and semantic extensions of the construction; and to analyze the components of that construction from multiple perspectives, sometimes including its historical development (Chang, 2021).⁴

Chinese scholars have reflected on and applied constructionist approaches to the teaching of Chinese as a second language (C. H. Shi, 2011), and several representative theories are presented here. Su and Lu (2010) and J. M. Lu (2016b) proposed the construction-chunk approach (构式-语块教学法), which advocates that in teaching certain special grammatical constructions, one should not be limited to the traditional syntactic concept of “subject-predicate-object” and the semantic concept of “agent-verb-patient,” but should outline the meaning of the construction, the constituent chunks, and the chain of chunks. Yuan et al. (2014) proposed the lexicon-construction interaction model (词库-构式互动体系), advocating the “big lexicon, small grammar” strategy, focusing on the knowledge structure of a large number of words and a small number of constructions. They applied this approach to the practice of international Chinese teaching, forming a set of teaching concepts and strategies based on the new Chinese knowledge system and database resources, which they believe are more suitable for Chinese. Feng and Shi (2011, 2015) proposed a new model of Chinese teaching and learning called trinitarian grammar (三一语法), which consists of three parts: the structure of the construction, the function of the construction, and the typical context of the construction. This model also reflects the core idea of the constructionist approaches that a construction is a pairing of form and meaning, in particular including pragmatic information as part of the construction’s meaning.

2.3 Theoretical Innovations

Chinese scholars have explored several issues in the field of constructionist approaches, including: the definition of construction; the classification of constructions; the origin of construction meanings; the interaction between constructions and constituents (such as verbs); the relationships between constructions; construction polysemy; and construction coercion, where a construction forces a word within the construction to have a marked meaning it does not have in other constructions (Goldberg, 1995, p. 159). With this in mind, this section will focus on some innovative ideas or theories proposed by Chinese scholars.

Some Chinese scholars argue that constructionist approaches offer a new perspective for integrating grammar and rhetoric. For instance, D. W. Liu (2010a, 2010b) outlines the evolutionary path of “grammatical constructions > rhetorical constructions > new grammatical constructions,” which was further refined and complemented by J. M. Lu (2016a). Liu and Lu both believe that this approach not only advances the constructionist approaches but also provides a new angle for rhetorical studies. Similarly, Y. Wang (2010, p. 47) claims that “the constructionist approach lies at the interface of grammar and rhetoric, and its theoretical framework and specific methods are also applicable to the study of figures of speech.” C. H. Shi (2012) sees construction coercion as the interface between grammar and rhetorical studies, providing an interactive perspective on the relationship between grammar and rhetoric, and accurately capturing the continuum between grammatical and rhetorical phenomena.

Su and Lu (2010) and J. M. Lu (2016b) proposed the construction–chunk approach (构式–语块分析法), which combines constructions and chunks: The “chunk” refers to “a syntactic–semantic aggregation in a construction that carries a semantic unit in a particular syntactic form” (Su & Lu, 2010, pp. 559–560). And it serves as the “basic unit of a construction” and “the intermediary between a construction and its internal lexical items.” Let us take the following as an example (J. M. Lu, 2016b, p. 6):

shige ren chi le yiguo fan, yiguo fan chi le shige ren (十个人吃了一锅饭/一锅饭吃了十个人, Ten people ate from one pot of rice/One pot of rice fed ten people, J. M. Lu, 2016b, p. 6)

When describing a construction, like this example, one should first grasp the construction meaning of the quantitative relationship as a whole and then explore the meaning of the chunks that make up the construction. For example, this construction could be described as “quantity of accommodation, manner of accommodation, quantity accommodated.”⁵

Y. Wang (2011) discusses and compares lexicalism, clausalism, and constructionism, and suggests that

the Chinese linguistics community has put forward many different views in establishing the basic units for studying the Chinese language, such as: morpheme-based, Chinese character-based, word-based, phrase-based, clause-based, sentence-based, and complex sentence-based. We believe that they can be unified into a construction-based approach. (Vol. 1, p. 81)

In addition, Y. Wang (2009, 2011, Vol. 1, p. 364) proposes the idea of “lexical coercion,” which means that in addition to construction coercion, lexical items can also adjust or change the meaning or usage of the whole construction. The combination of construction coercion and lexical coercion represents true interaction between a construction and lexical items, and is consistent with the findings of usage-based research.

C. H. Shi (2016, 2018) systematically constructed a new model of construction analysis, interactive construction grammar (互动构式语法). First, he emphasizes the multi-interactive view, which means that all constructions result from the interaction of multiple factors,

including both the interaction of the components within the language system and the interaction between the intra- and extralinguistic components. Second, Shi considers synonymous or near-synonymous constructions as the same “construction group” (句式群) and tries to reveal the differences and connections in forms and meanings between them through the interactive-derivational approach. This theory strengthens the interactive concept of constructionist approaches, expands the synchronic and diachronic analysis of constructions based on the interactive view, and emphasizes the necessity and feasibility of the methodological principles of sophisticated reductionism (精致还原主义) or sophisticated holism (精致整体主义) in the study of constructions; that is, while adhering to holism in methodology, it tries to figure out the components that make up the whole, the interaction between them, and the processes that make up the whole, in order to explain the characteristics of the whole that emerges.

3. Comments

3.1 *Narrow Understanding of the Concept of Construction*

Constructionist approaches comprise various schools that can be broadly divided into formal and usage-based categories (Hoffman, 2022, pp. 14–15). The former includes embodied construction grammar, fluid construction grammar, and sign-based construction grammar, while the latter includes cognitive grammar, radical construction grammar, and cognitive construction grammar. In China, cognitive construction grammar dominates, but instead of a broad definition of construction, characterized by sufficient frequency in language use and entrenchment in speakers’ minds (e.g., Goldberg, 2006, p. 5, 2013), a narrow definition of construction—characterized by more than one unit, formal or semantic unpredictability, and schematic patterns—is still popular.⁶ As a result, the Chinese linguistics community has not fully accepted the term *goushi* (构式) or *construction* and has spent much effort distinguishing it from traditional concepts such as *juxing* (句型), *julei* (句类), *jumo* (句模), and *jushi* (句式; Fan, 2013; J. M. Lu, 2016b). As for Croft’s radical construction grammar, which has a broad definition of construction and a radical grammatical system and methodology, only a few Chinese papers have adopted it, limiting themselves to language comparisons or cross-linguistic investigations (e.g., Gao, 2020; Xiong, 2016; L. J. Zhang, 2011).⁷ Chinese scholars have also rarely adopted formal constructionist approaches, as opposed to usage-based constructionist approaches.

3.2 *Narrow Range of the Research Topics and Objects of Inquiry*

The narrow range of the research topics and objects is manifested in three aspects. First, due to the adoption of a narrow definition of constructions, the range of linguistic units studied is relatively limited, focusing mainly on complex and schematic constructions, such as argument structure constructions and partly variable constructions (especially idiomatic constructions).⁸ This is because these constructions best fit the characteristics of the narrow definition of constructions mentioned in Section 3.1. Although early construction-based research in the 1980s and 1990s was initially based on the study of idioms (e.g., Fillmore et al., 1988), idioms are only one type of construction. Unfortunately, the study of constructions in China is still mainly

focused on them. Moreover, although these studies are said to be in the realm of construction grammar, the authors still rely on traditional grammar or structuralist approaches that contradict the basic notions of construction grammar. Second, probably due to the influence of a written language bias (Linell, 2005), the corpora adopted by Chinese construction grammarians are mainly written corpora, with spoken corpora in the minority. Many Chinese scholars have not yet come to the conclusion that “every text has its own grammar” or consciously thought about the relationship between grammar and register as well as genre (but see Hu, 1993; H. Y. Tao, 1999; B. J. Zhang, 2007). Third, Chinese construction grammarians have mainly focused on the synchronic study of Mandarin Chinese, and while the number of diachronic studies is growing, cross-linguistic comparative studies are still rare.⁹ As a result, there is a tendency to mechanically apply categories from other languages or assumed global or universal categories to Chinese, or to apply Chinese-based categories to minority languages, reflecting the need for Chinese scholars to move away from the Indo-European perspective (摆脱印欧语的眼光) and the traditional Chinese perspective.

3.3 Narrow Range of Disciplinary Perspectives and Research Methods

Chinese scholars face three major methodological problems in applying constructionist approaches to the study of languages. First, constructionist approaches in China are still limited to syntax, with little attention paid to phonetics, lexicology, semantics, pragmatics, language acquisition, and language evolution. Or rather, many Chinese scholars have not thoroughly implemented the noncomponential view of the constructionist approach, but still distinguish between different components such as phonological components, syntactic components, and semantic components, and try to use the concept of interface or linking rules to explore the relationships between them. Second, interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary studies, such as with the fields of cognitive psychology, neurolinguistics, and computational linguistics, remain relatively underdeveloped. Third, many Chinese scholars rely purely on introspection to explain constructions, without using quantitative or empirical methods such as in-situ analysis of constructions in extensive natural data, corpus-based statistics, or psychological experiments, which makes their explanations highly subjective.

4. Outlook

4.1 Adopting a Usage-Based Approach and Keeping Up With the Advances in the Study of Construction Networks

Construction grammarians emphasize that constructions are the basic units of language, with scholars such as Goldberg (2003, p. 223) proposing constructions “all the way down,” Taylor (2012, pp. 143–145) proposing constructions “all the way up,” and Boogaart et al. (2014, p. 1) proposing constructions “all the way everywhere.” This is the reason why constructionist approaches continue to develop and be adopted by many fields, including language acquisition and natural-language processing. In order for Chinese construction grammarians to keep up with international scholars, they need to go beyond the narrow definition of constructions. On the one

hand, they should implement the general idea of a usage-based approach such as the creation of meaning (LaPolla, 2015), integrationist linguistics (Harris, 1981), and radical construction grammar (Croft, 2001, 2022), all of which view grammar as a dynamic system of emergent categories and elastic constraints that are constantly changing in response to domain-general cognitive processes in language use. This would allow for the exploration of the rationale for language systems in both language history and acquisition (Bybee, 2010; Diessel, 2016, 2019; Hoffman, 2022; Perek, 2015). On the other hand, construction grammarians should focus on and engage in discussions around construction networks, adopting a “networks all the way down” perspective (Hilpert, 2021) that emphasizes the one-to-many, many-to-one, and many-to-many pairings of form and meaning/function. This would involve treating the constructicon, which is a full list of the constructions that make up a speaker’s entrenched repertoire or a community’s conventionalized grammatical knowledge, as a complex, nested network with multiple links (e.g., symbolic, syntagmatic, paradigmatic, taxonomic, pragmatic; Diessel, 2019, 2023; Hilpert, 2021; Schmid, 2020).¹⁰

4.2 Broadening the Scope of Construction-Based Research and Integrating It With Other Fields

If a broad view of constructions is taken, all linguistic categories can be examined from a constructionist perspective, including morphology, words, phrases, idioms, clauses, sentences, discourses, word classes, syntactic relations, information-structure constructions, transitivity, and so on, in addition to more complex and schematic constructions.¹¹ In fact, some Chinese scholars have already discussed some of these linguistic categories from a constructionist viewpoint, such as B. J. Zhang (2016) Shen (2017), and Song (2018), who argue that the basic clause type in Chinese is the “topic-comment” construction,¹² and Gao and Zhang (2008), R. Zhang (2009), and Yang (2019), who discuss and question the status of lexical categories or word classes in Chinese based on the usage-based constructionist approach. Unfortunately, these studies have been more or less ignored in existing reviews, probably because of the relatively small amount of literature on them, and more likely because the review authors hold a narrow view of constructions. In terms of using information-structure to understand constructions, *Wang Mian si le fuqin* (王冕死了父亲) ‘Wang Mian lost his father’, Lit. ‘Wang Mian died father’, has received a great deal of discussion (e.g., Lü, 2013; Ren, 2009; Shen, 2006; Y. Zhang, 2010), but its information structure as a topic-comment structure which has an event presentative structure as the comment (LaPolla & Poa, 2023) has not been given much attention.

Regarding registers, some Chinese scholars have emphasized that registers are a part of the conventionalized knowledge of constructions, and have suggested that constructionist approaches can be applied to the study of spoken language (Zheng, 2012). To further advance this field, Chinese construction grammarians could benefit from strengthening their exchanges with disciplines such as sociolinguistics, corpus linguistics, multimodal construction grammar, conversation analysis, and interactional linguistics. In this regard, H. Y. Tao (2003) represents one of the most promising directions in terms of spoken discourse, multiple modalities, and on-going language change.

Construction-based research in China should also focus on integration with fields such as historical linguistics and language typology. A research trend in the international grammar community is to observe and study constructions from both a historical (Bybee, 2010; Traugott & Trousdale, 2013) and a typological perspective (Croft, 2022; LaPolla, 2013b). Historical linguistics and linguistic typology have been relatively well studied in China, thanks to the preservation of more than 2,000 years' worth of written materials and the availability of a large number of Chinese dialects and minority languages. So why is it still necessary to combine them with the constructionist approach? On the one hand, constructionist theories or hypotheses can be tested using the methods of linguistic typology and historical linguistics, which facilitate the refinement or formulation of a more empirically valid theory. On the other hand, scholars engaged in linguistic typology and historical linguistics can also benefit from the constructionist approach. When writing reference grammars and making cross-linguistic comparisons, they do not need to assume any global or universal categories but only to summarize the constructions or categories that are found inductively in the language.¹³ For the study of historical linguistics, grammaticalization, and lexicalization, the constructionist approach shows that the evolution of linguistic units is not a change in isolated forms but rather a change in form and meaning interacting with each other on a constructional basis. Nor is it a change in individual units, but rather a change in units within constructions or a change in constructions as a whole.

Broadening the scope of research on constructions and integrating it with language typology and historical linguistics can solve the problem, mentioned by Wen and Si (2021), that there are many case studies but few systematic studies, and the research results are relatively fragmented and do not form a system. By doing so, a construction grammar system that is rooted in Chinese culture, reflects the characteristics of Chinese, and is proposed by Chinese scholars themselves can be built, as proposed by Niu et al. (2020, p. 291).

4.3 Integrating Cross-Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Research Findings and Methods

Although linguistics has long been fragmented with disconnected and incompatible perspectives, there is a trend toward synthesis and integration in the field thanks to cross-disciplinary work (Christiansen & Chater, 2017; LaPolla, 2017, 2023). In this process, the constructionist approach plays a key role. As Goldberg (2013, pp. 30–31) stated, “the constructionist approach is the fastest-growing linguistic and interdisciplinary approach to language.” The construction-based research in China should also adapt to this trend by (a) implementing the noncomponential view of the constructionist approaches and moving away from fragmentation within linguistics, for example by including syntax, semantics, phonology, language typology and change, computational linguistics, language processing, child language acquisition, and language evolution; (b) strengthening relationships with disciplines outside linguistics, such as cognitive psychology, cognitive neuroscience, sociology, evolution studies, anthropology, complexity science, network science, natural-language processing, and more; and (c) drawing on diverse research methods from other fields, including corpus-based quantitative methods, experimental methods (e.g., eye-tracking, event-related potential scanning, and functional magnetic resonance imaging), and using multiple data sources as converging evidence, including authentic

corpora, cross-linguistic surveys, historical surveys, sociolinguistic records, psycholinguistic and neurolinguistic experiments, instrumental speech analysis, and so on. The emphasis should be on the use of cross-validation studies to confirm or falsify theoretical hypotheses related to constructionist approaches. In short, not only should multidisciplinary linguistic research results be utilized and integrated, but also cross-disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and supra-disciplinary research methods should be developed, resulting in a multidisciplinary research paradigm.¹⁴

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Notes

1. This article was the first comprehensive introduction to constructionist approaches in China and has played an important role in familiarizing people with this linguistic theory. It has the second-highest citation rate and the fifth-highest download rate among articles featuring the keyword “construction grammar” in CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure). The authors made a significant contribution to the growing popularity of the term *goushi* (构式) by revising its translation from *jushi* (句式) to *goushi* (构式), as recommended by an anonymous reviewer.
2. The way *construction* is translated reflected Chinese construction grammarians’ understanding of the concept of construction, which may be different from what we understand now. For example, 结构 might be ‘structure’; 结构式 might be ‘structural pattern’; 句式 might be ‘sentence pattern’; 句型 might be ‘sentence form’. These translations all reflect a view of construction as being just about syntactic structure rather than the totality of the natural utterance.
3. <https://www.zgbk.com/ecph/words?SiteID=1&ID=154382&Type=bkzyb&SubID=45054> <<https://www.zgbk.com/ecph/words?SiteID=1&ID=154382&Type=bkzyb&SubID=45054>>
4. Shao (2015) and C. A. Wu (2016) have reflected on this type of research and provided an outlook on future research topics.
5. One of the distinctive features of this theory is that its chunks are not borrowed from a pre-existing list of semantic roles, but are instead analyzed based on the meaning of the whole construction. This approach fully embodies the top-down research orientation of constructionist approaches. Consequently, the semantic roles of the chunks are determined by the specific constructions, which fully reflects the trend of “from abstract to concrete” in the study of Chinese grammar (Yang & Li, 2022).
6. Based on this narrow definition, morphemes are not considered constructions; only idioms are usually considered as such, as are schematic patterns like “N V N N,” while constructs like *ta song le wo yiben shu* (他送了我一本书) ‘He gave me a book’ are not.

7. J. G. Lu (2022) discusses possible reasons for the neglect of radical construction grammar in China, including the misconception that it is a common constructionist approach like the others; the inappropriateness of translating *radical* as *jijin* (激进), which he suggests should be *chuncui* (纯粹) ‘pure’; and that the basic position of radical construction grammar is too subversive and not easily accepted.
8. Following Traugott’s (2007) distinction, it seems that Chinese scholars are more concerned with macro-constructions and meso-constructions, and less concerned with micro-constructions and constructs. As a result, constructionalization, as well as the systematic connections between constructions, may be neglected.
9. The literature cited in this paper focuses mainly on Mandarin Chinese, since research on this language is the most abundant.
10. Due to the influence of structuralism and transformational-generative grammar, Chinese scholars used to focus more on the relationship between homomorphic constructions. For instance, in his study of ditransitive constructions, B. J. Zhang (1999) only emphasized “similarities between forms” and did not examine “the relationship between synonymous constructions,” as commented on by B. J. Zhang (2018, p. 6). Similarly, Chang (2021) notes that comparative studies of construction pairs/clusters with the same meaning or function are scarce. In recent years, however, Chinese scholars have begun to explore relationships between synonymous constructions. Shi’s (2016, 2018) multi-interactive perspective and treatment of construction groups embody the network view, and J. M. Lu (2022) discusses the differences in information structure and chunk arrangement between synonymous constructions.
11. LaPolla (2013a) examines a variety of Chinese phenomena from a constructionist approach, including the *ba* (把) construction, the *zhe ben shu de chuban* (这本书的出版, publication of this book) construction, and the topic-comment construction, as well as the clausal referential phrase-modifying construction with *de* (的), among others.
12. LaPolla (2009) takes a similar view, treating topic-comment as the unmarked focus structure, but outlines several marked focus structures.
13. For the study of Mandarin Chinese, LaPolla (2013a) suggests that

the most useful approach to Chinese grammar then is to take the constructions as basic, and not try to impose global categories on the language for which there is no empirical evidence, as taking the constructions as basic means there is no need for abstract global categories in individual languages or cross-linguistically. (p. 51)

14. Fortunately, Chinese linguistics on the global stage is becoming increasingly focused on empirical methods, with a clear shift from a more rationalist mode of inquiry to a more empirical one (cf. Jing-Schmidt, 2013, p. 1; LaPolla, 2017).

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